



# Cow Comfort: not just for farmers

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# Rayner Visitor Center

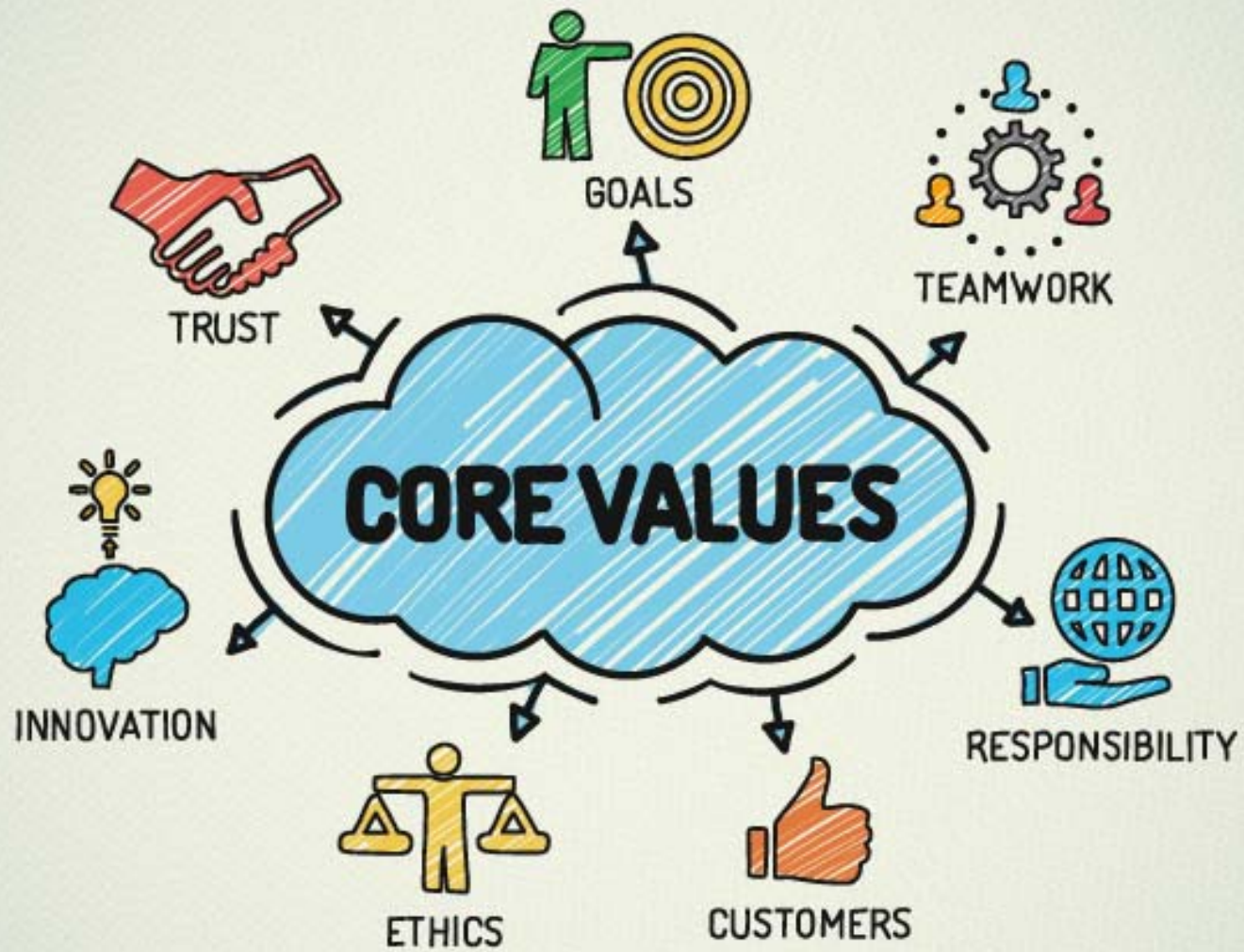
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- As of December 2019
  - 6,664 visitors
  - Increased numbers from 2018
    - Increased school groups by 44%
    - Increased professional visits by 18%
    - Increased general public visits by 38%
- Developed curriculum specific tours and activities
  - K-12
- Cover topics from basic cow comfort to the biochemistry of milk production

# Research opportunity

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- Developed a questionnaire aimed at teachers
  - “Before and After” style questionnaire
- Is the story we are telling relevant or necessary?
  - Understand baseline knowledge
  - Fix any major knowledge gaps
- What do people visiting the Rayner Center care about?



## Creating Shared Values

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***“Fundamental beliefs, concepts, and principles that underlie the culture of an organization and connect with consumers core values”***

# Completed small pilot study

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- Survey was developed and used on participants in the summer and fall of 2019
  - Participants included 11 teachers from different schools in Saskatoon
  
- Participants attended a cow comfort focused tour
  - Importance of rest and time budgets
  - Clean environment
  - Minimized stress
  
- Surveys were administered through a program that kept anonymity
  - Teachers were allowed to provide open-ended feedback to each question



Cow comfort is a shared value

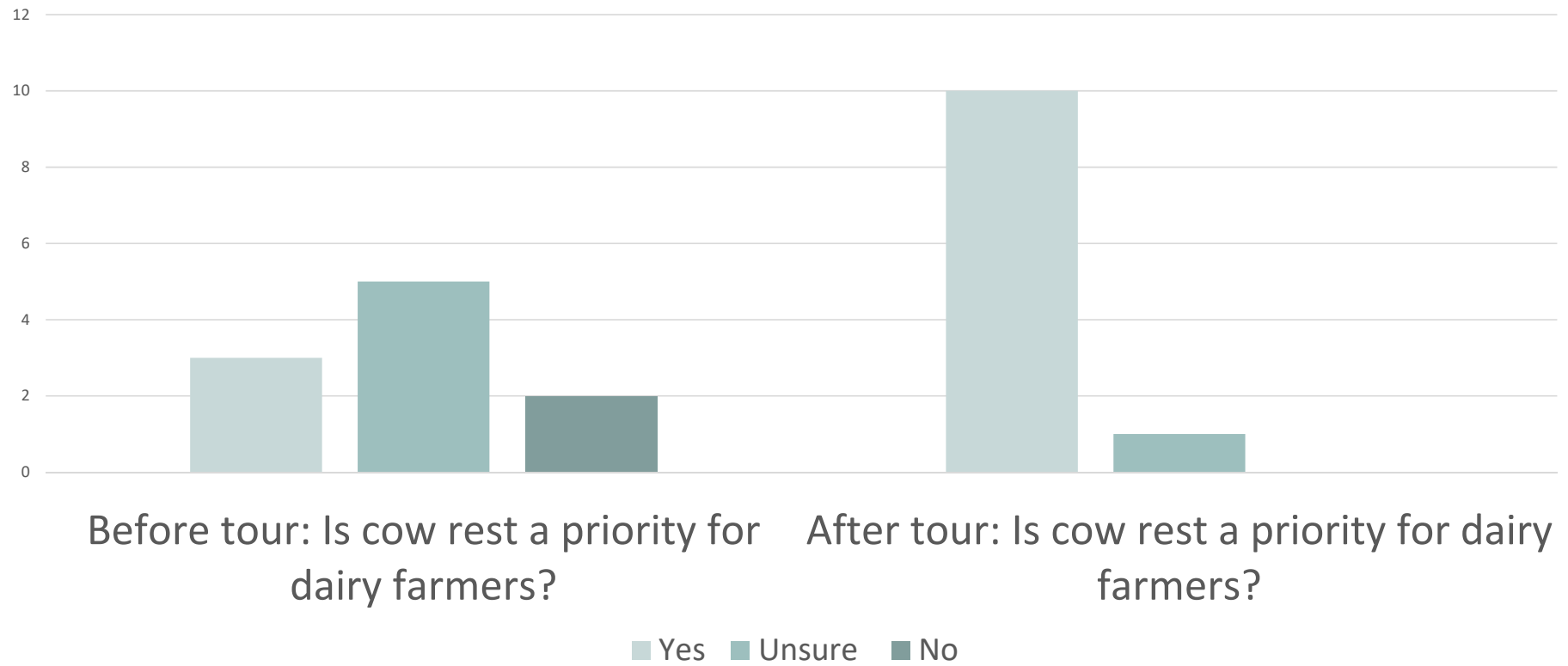
# Tour information: rest is a priority

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- Cows prioritize rest over other behaviors
- When rest isn't an option it can negatively impact
  - Feed intake
  - Cow performance
  - Health
- Tour discussed proAction and vital cow comfort measures
  - Stocking density- 1.2 mature cows to stalls
  - Completing animal health assessments every other year- with housing and stall comfort a factor
- Overall, participants were unaware that cow rest was a priority for farmers



## Cow Comfort Survey: Rest



## Comments on rest

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*“Was absolutely shocked when I saw their combination living and sleeping area. I honestly didn’t even know they had stalls. I wish we kept horses in a place like this so they can socialize more! Super neat.”*

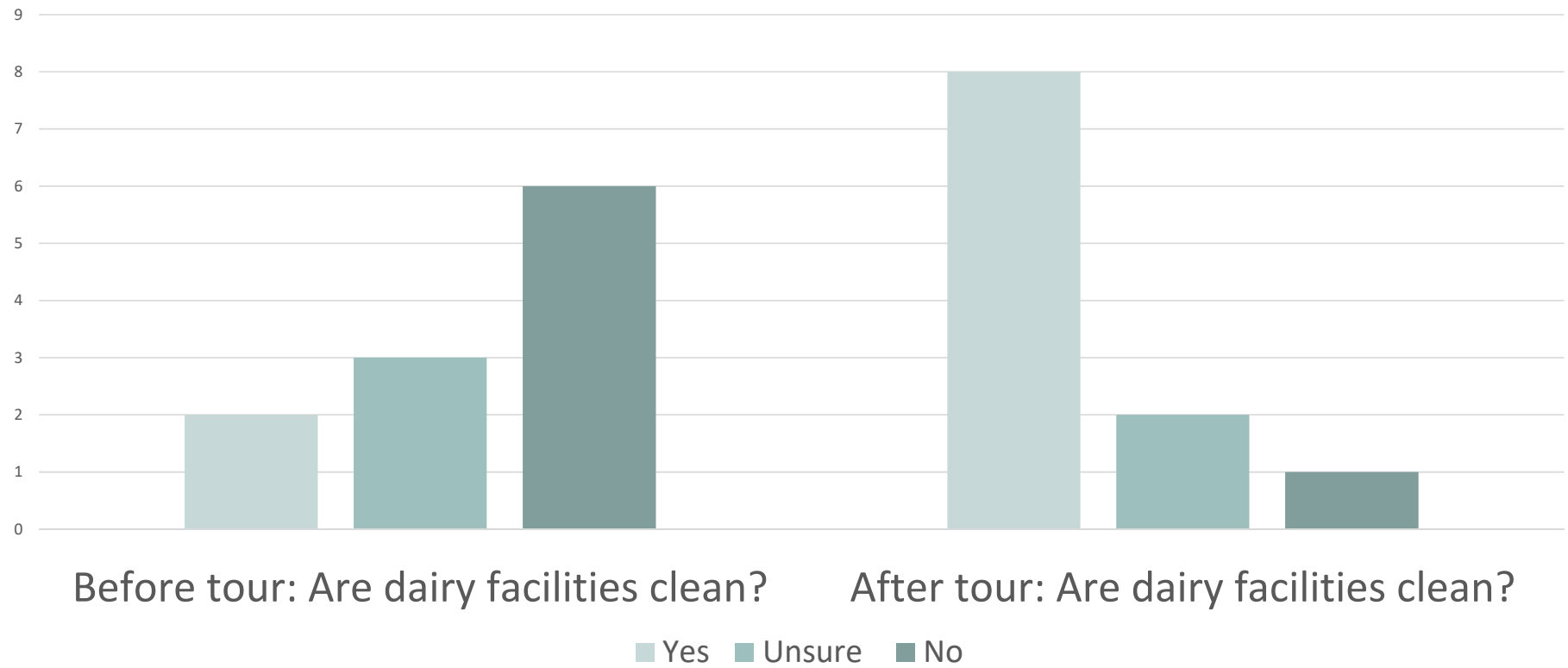
*“Do people even put this much effort into rest? Really interesting.”*

# Tour information: keep it clean

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- Cleanliness of a facility has an impact on both cow health and welfare
- Manure is a source of bacteria growth and is the cause of transmission for many diseases
- Farmers regularly disinfect, remove manure, and maintain bedding
  - Decreases pathogens in the environment
- Cleanliness also leads to a decrease in hoof issues
  - Slips/falls
  - Digital dermatitis
  - Lameness

## Cow Comfort Survey: Cleanliness



## Comments on cleanliness

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“I wonder if all farms hold themselves to the same standards as one which allows public access.”

“Confused about the smell.”

## General Comments

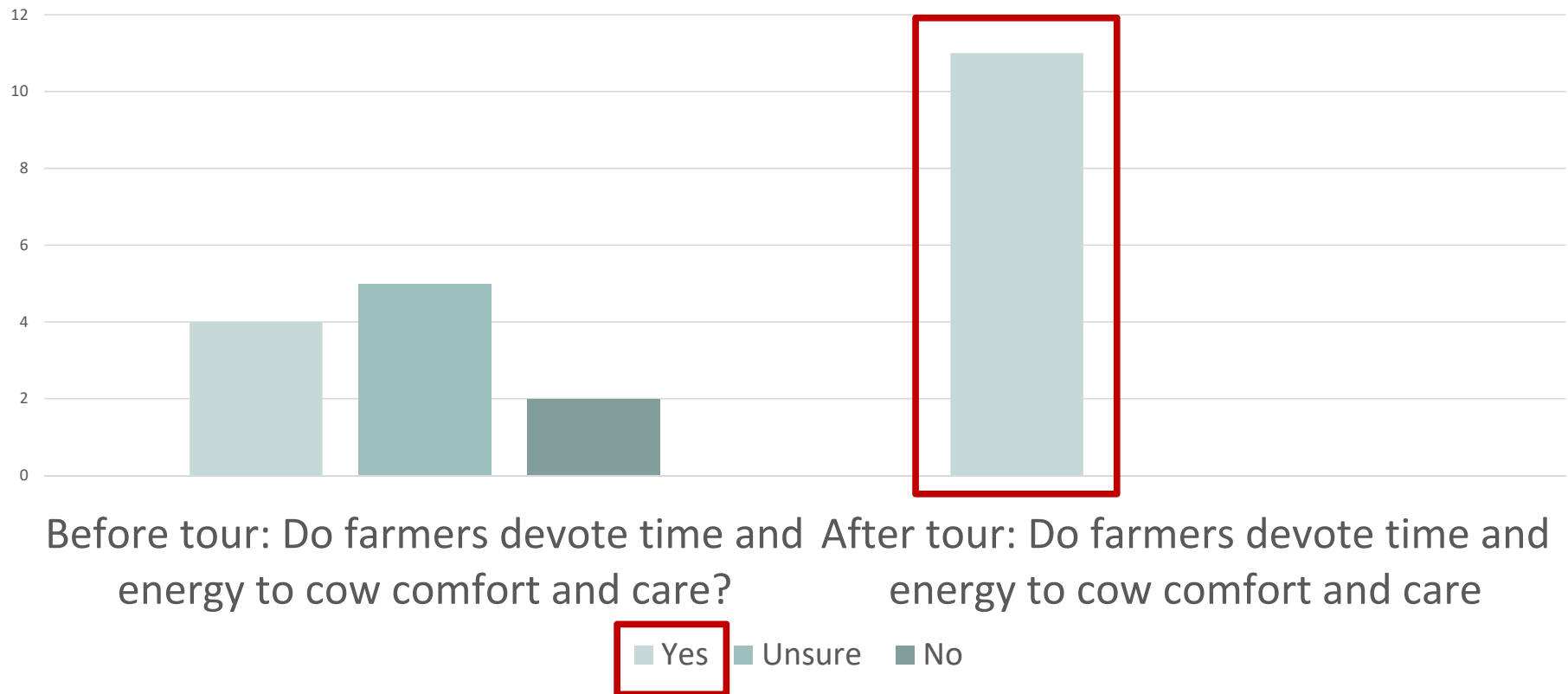
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“Still struggle with the being pregnancy so often thing. That said, they seem to be treated very well.”

“Farmers are sure busy.”

“Can’t believe cow comfort is an area of study, think they will ever study teacher comfort?”

## Cow Comfort Survey: Cow Care





# Next steps

- Results and feedback have been used to edit tours and the questionnaire
- Multiple projects
  - Students (broken down into age groups)
  - Teachers
- Increase number of teachers tours at the Rayner Center
  - They reach a lot of kids
- Increase understanding of shared values with the public





Questions?

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